

## CHAPTER 25

### *Al-Furqân: The Discrimination*

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 6 sections; 77 verses)

This chapter, which is entitled *The Discrimination*, is in its entirety a Makkan revelation. It belongs in all likelihood to the last Makkan period, as it shows that the signs of the great transformation, which was to be brought about by the Qur'ân, could now be seen in the lives of the companions of the Prophet. The last chapter, a Madînah revelation, speaks of the Divine Light which was manifested through the Prophet, and is therefore followed by a chapter which shows that that light was now being manifested in the lives of the Prophet's companions.

The chapter opens with the statement that the Holy Prophet's message was for all nations of the world, and, as the last exposition of the doctrine of Divine Unity, it must unite all the nations and uproot all sorts of polytheism. The disbelievers objected to the Prophet being a mortal, and to this an answer is given in the concluding words of the second section, which asserts the truth of the warning. The third section points out that discrimination will be finally made between good and evil, and refers to the day of Discrimination or the battle of Badr. These general statements are followed by concrete instances of the fate of previous peoples, some of which are very briefly referred to in the fourth section. The fifth section draws attention to some natural phenomena, which bear evidence to the law of gradual growth in nature, showing that Truth was gradually gaining ground. The chapter is brought to a close by a description of the righteous servants of the Beneficent Allâh, being, in fact, an indication of the mighty transformation which had already begun to work.

#### SECTION 1: A Warner for all Nations

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

**1** Blessed is He Who sent down the Discrimination upon His servant that he might be a warner to the nations<sup>a</sup>—

**2** He, Whose is the kingdom of the *samâwât* and the earth, and Who did not take to Himself a son, and Who has no associate in the kingdom, and Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure.<sup>a</sup>

**3** And they take besides Him deities who create naught, while they are themselves created, and they control for themselves neither harm nor profit, and they control not death, nor life, nor raising to life.

**4** And those who disbelieve say: This is nothing but a lie, which he has forged, and other people have helped him at it. So indeed they have brought an iniquity and a falsehood.

**5** And they say: Stories of the ancients, which he has got written, so they are read out to him morning and evening!<sup>a</sup>

**1a.** *Furqan* (Discrimination, Criterion) is one of the names of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân because of the distinction which it brings about between truth and falsehood; see 2:185c. As this chapter deals with the mighty transformation which the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân had brought about in the lives of the people, as shown in the last section, it is mentioned here by the name *Furqân*. The addition of the words that the Prophet may be a warner to the nations is to show that the transformation which was being brought about in Arabia would ultimately extend over the whole world and all nations would benefit.

**2a.** Verses 2 and 3 speak of the different kinds of the polytheistic beliefs prevailing in the world, which were all destined to be swept away by the doctrine of Divine Unity as preached by Islâm.

**5a.** In the previous verse, their allegation is that the Qur'ân is a forgery; here they allege that the Prophet had caused some stories of the ancients to be written down by some people who helped him and it was these stories which were recited to him and which he gave out as a revelation from on High. How could mere stories bring about the transformation which the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân was working in the hearts of men? Attention to this is drawn in the next verse.

**6** Say: He has revealed it, Who knows the secret of the *samâwât* and the earth.<sup>a</sup> Surely He is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

**7** And they say: What a Messenger is this? He eats food and goes about in the markets. Why has not an *malik* been sent down to him to be a warner with him?<sup>a</sup>

**8** Or a treasure given to him, or a garden from which to eat?<sup>a</sup> And the evildoers say: You follow but a man bewitched!

**9** See what parables they set forth for you — they have gone astray, so they cannot find a way.<sup>a</sup>

**6a.** The secrets of the *samâwât* and the earth which are known to Allâh alone include the secrets of human nature. Transformation in human being's lives has always been brought about by means of Divine revelation, and mortal efforts have ever failed in changing the hearts of human beings.

**7a.** The Prophet's life was one of the utmost simplicity. He did all his work himself. He aided his wives in their household duties, mended his clothes, tied up the goats, and even cobbled his sandals. Nay, his kind and genial nature often led him to do other's work. Once a woman, unable to work for herself, asked him to lead her into a certain street; he accompanied her there, only taking leave when her work was accomplished. He was a mortal, and partook of the ordinary food of a simple Arab. Hence they speak of him as *eating food*. The answer to this is given in verse 20, viz., that all prophets were mortal and subject to human laws, even as the Holy Prophet.

**8a.** Their idea of a messenger of Allâh was that he should be rolling in wealth. In fact, wealth was all in all to them and they paid no consideration to the moral, the higher, values of life for which the Prophet came. They were at the same time told that, though the Muslims had to suffer privations, they would be rewarded for their sacrifices in this very life. Treasures were placed at the feet of the companions of the Holy Prophet, and they were given gardens. But all this happened in accordance with Divine law, which requires the fulfilment of prophecy to be brought about gradually, even as it requires all growth to be gradual in the physical world.

**9a.** Elsewhere, the disbelievers are quoted as saying: "Why was not this Qur'ân revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?" (43:31). Nothing except rank or wealth had any importance in their eyes, so narrow was their outlook on life. Their very conception of the real values of life was wrong, so they could not find a way.

## SECTION 2: Truth of the Warning

**10** Blessed is He Who, if He please, will give you what is better than this: Gardens wherein flow rivers. And He will give you palaces.<sup>a</sup>

**11** But they deny the Hour, and We have prepared a burning Fire for him who denies the Hour.

**12** When it sees them from a far-off place, they will hear its raging and roaring.

**13** And when they are cast into a narrow place thereof in chains, they will there pray for destruction.

**14** Pray not this day for destruction once but pray for destruction again and again.

**15** Say: Is this better or the Garden of Perpetuity, which the dutiful are promised? That is a reward and a resort for them.

**16** For them therein is what they desire, to abide. It is a promise to be prayed for from your *Rabb*.<sup>a</sup>

**17** And on the day when He will gather them, and that which they serve besides Allâh, He will say: Was it you who led astray these My servants, or did they themselves stray from the path?

**18** They will say: Glory be to You! It was not beseeming for us that we should take for protectors others besides You, but You did make them and their fathers to enjoy until they forgot the Reminder, and they became a lost people.<sup>a</sup>

**10a.** These words contain a clear prophecy that the Prophet and his followers will receive the good things of this life too. The gardens of Mesopotamia, the palaces of Persia and of the Caesars, were given to the companions of the Holy Prophet.

**16a.** The Garden is promised to the faithful but they should pray to their *Rabb* for its bestowal, because prayer to Allâh is the means by which it can be attained.

**19** So they will give you the lie in what you say, then you can neither ward off (evil), nor (obtain) help. And whoever among you does wrong, We shall make him taste a great chastisement.

**20** And We did not send before you any messengers but they surely ate food and went about in the markets. And We make some of you a trial for others. Will you bear patiently? And your *Rabb* is ever Seeing.<sup>a</sup>

## **Part 19**

### **SECTION 3: The Day of Discrimination**

**21** And those who look not for meeting with Us, say: Why have not *malâ'ikah* been sent down to us, or (why) do we not see our *Rabb*? Indeed they are too proud of themselves and revolt in great revolt.<sup>a</sup>

**22** On the day when they will see the *malâ'ikah*, there will be no good news for the guilty, and they will say: Let there be a strong barrier!<sup>a</sup>

**18a.** The words *it was not beseeming for us that we should take for protectors others besides You* show that those who worshipped Allâh alone could not ask their followers to worship others than Allâh. The reference is clearly to “Jesus Christ” the Christian deity.

**20a.** This is an injunction to the Muslims to bear the persecutions of their opponents patiently, for these trials will distinguish the bad from the good. The concluding words are a solace to them: *Your Rabb is ever Seeing* — He will punish the oppressors.

**21a.** The coming of the *malâ'ikah* and the *Rabb* signify the coming of the threatened punishment, and the next verse makes it clear; see 2:210a.

**23** And We shall turn to the work they have done, so We shall render it as scattered motes.<sup>a</sup>

**24** The owners of the Garden will on that day be in a better abiding place and a fairer resting-place.

**25** And on the day when the *samâ'* bursts asunder with clouds, and the *malâ'ikah* are sent down, as they are sent.<sup>a</sup>

**26** The kingdom on that day rightly belongs to the Beneficent, and it will be a hard day for the disbelievers.

**27** And on the day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying: Would that I had taken a way with the Messenger!<sup>a</sup>

**28** O woe is me! Would that I had not taken such a one for a friend!

**29** Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me. And the *shaitân* ever deserts people.

**22a.** The words *hijr-an mahjûr-an* (“strong barrier”) may bear different interpretations according as they are taken to be spoken by the *malâ'ikah* or by the guilty. In the former case, the meaning is that good news will be a forbidden thing to the guilty,

which is equivalent to saying that they will be punished. In the latter case, the words are a kind of prayer for the coming of a barrier between them and their punishment.

**23a.** All the exertions of the Quraish were brought to naught in the battle of Badr, and all attempts to uproot Truth are dealt with similarly.

**25a.** This description of the day of Badr is also given in 8:11, where the falling of rain is clearly mentioned, and on the same occasion is also mentioned the coming of the *malâ'ikah*. The next verse shows that it will be a day of victory for the Muslims, the believers in the Beneficent, and a hard day for the disbelievers. In fact, the distress and hardship the Quraish experienced in the battle of Badr were not tasted by them in any of their subsequent encounters with the Muslims.

**27a.** Commentators have here mentioned the names of some people who fought with the Prophet at Badr. But the statement is general and the evildoer often regrets the evil he did, when he suffers the consequences of the evil done.

**30** And the Messenger will say: My *Rabb*, surely my people treat this Qur'ân as a forsaken thing.

**31** And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the guilty, and sufficient is your *Rabb* as a Guide and a Helper.

**32** And those who disbelieve say: Why has not the Qur'ân been revealed to him all at once? Thus, that We may strengthen your heart thereby and We have arranged it well in arranging.<sup>a</sup>

**33** And they cannot bring you a question, but We have brought you the truth and the best explanation.<sup>a</sup>

**34** Those who will be gathered to hell on their faces — they are in an evil plight and straying farther away from the path.

#### SECTION 4: A Lesson in the Fate of Former People

**35** And certainly We gave Mûsâ the Book and We appointed with him his brother Hârûn, an aider.

**32a.** *Rattala* means *he put together and arranged well the component parts of the speech* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The Qur'ân was revealed piecemeal so that, under the varying circumstances through which the Prophet passed,

the Divine revelation might be a source of strength to his heart; and then, as it were, to refute any suggestion that the revelation might remain a disorderly collection of fragments revealed under different circumstances, having no connection with each other, it is added that the entire arrangement was also Divinely accomplished. The arrangement of the Qur'ân, according to this verse, was a part of the Divine scheme, brought about in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, who was the recipient of the Divine revelation.

**33a.** *Mathal* ("question") signifies *a description, state, or case*, and is metaphorically applied to *a state or condition* that is *strange or wonderful* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), or it means *hujjat*, i.e., an *argument* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faid Murtaḍâ*). The meaning is that they cannot bring any *strange question* (*Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharî) or *strange objection* (*Jâmi' al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân* (Commentary), by Al-Shaikh Mu'în al-Dîn ibn Safî al-Dîn) which has not been answered in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân with truth, and of which the best explanation is not given therein. The verse lays down the basis of an important principle, viz., that the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân not only contains answers to all objections against it, but also adduces arguments of the truth of the assertions made. No other religious book of the world satisfies this requirement, which circumstance alone places the Qur'ân above all scriptures, and points to it as a unique revelation capable of satisfying the religious requirements of all people in all times.

**36** Then We said: Go you both to the people who reject Our messages. So We destroyed them with utter destruction.

**37** And the people of Nûḥ, when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them, and made them a sign for people. And We have prepared a painful chastisement for the wrongdoers—

**38** And 'Âd and Thâmûd and the dwellers of Rass and many generations in between.<sup>a</sup>

**39** And to each We gave examples and each did We destroy with utter destruction.<sup>a</sup>

**40** And indeed they pass by the town wherein was rained an evil rain.<sup>a</sup> Do they not see it? Nay, they hope not to be raised again.

**41** And when they see you, they take you for naught but a jest: Is this he whom Allâh has raised to be a messenger?

**42** He had well-nigh led us astray from our deities had we not adhered to them patiently! And they will know, when they see the chastisement, who is more astray from the path.

**38a.** According to *Zajjâj* (Grammarian), Rass was a country in which a part of the tribe of Thamûd resided; others say that Rass is the name of a town in Yamâmah (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faiḍ Murtaḍâ*). Rass also means a well, and it is said that they were a people who threw their prophet into a well (*Jâmi‘ al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur’ân* (Commentary), by Al-Shaikh Mu‘în al-Dîn ibn Safî al-Dîn).

**39a.** The meaning is that every one of these generations was warned of its doom by citing examples of those who had previously perished, but, not heeding the warning, was destroyed.

**40a.** This town is Sodom, which was situated on the way to Syria.

**43** Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his deity?<sup>a</sup> Will you be a guardian over him?

**44** Or think you that most of them hear or understand? They are but as the cattle; nay, they are farther astray from the path.

## SECTION 5: A Lesson from Nature

**45** See you not how your *Rabb* extends the shade? And if He pleased, He would have made it stationary. Then We have made the sun an indication of it,

**46** Then We take it to Ourselves, taking little by little.<sup>a</sup>

**47** And He it is Who made the night a covering for you, and sleep a rest, and He made the day to rise up again.

**48** And He it is Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy; and We send down pure water from the clouds,

**49** That We may give life thereby to a dead land,<sup>a</sup> and give it for drink to cattle and many people that We have created.

**43a.** This verse shows how broad is the idea of *shirk* or *polytheism* according to the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. It is not simply worship of idols that is condemned, but



blindly following one's desires is equally condemned. Many men who consider themselves the servants of the One Deity really bow in submission before the greatest of their idols, i.e., their desire. The monotheistic doctrine has here been brought to perfection not to be met with elsewhere.

**46a.** This and the previous verse show that Allâh deals mercifully with His servants. He would not destroy them all at once. The sun of righteousness had risen, and there were clear indications that the shadows of darkness would disappear, but, as in physical nature, they would not disappear suddenly, but gradually, diminishing little by little.

**49a.** The mercy of Allâh, which appears in the form of rain in physical nature, comes similarly in the form of revelation. As the pure water from the clouds gives life to a dead land, so does the pure water of revelation from Him raise the religiously dead to life.

**50** And certainly We repeat this to them that they may be mindful, but most people consent to naught but denying.

**51** And if We pleased, We could raise a warner in every town.<sup>a</sup>

**52** So obey not the disbelievers, and strive against them a mighty striving with it.<sup>a</sup>

**53** And He it is Who has made the two seas to flow freely, the one sweet, very sweet, and the other saltiest, bitter. And between the two He has made a barrier and inviolable obstruction.<sup>a</sup>

**54** And He it is Who has created mortals from water, then He has made for him blood-relationship and marriage-relationship.<sup>a</sup> And your *Rabb* is ever Powerful.

**51a.** The companions of the Holy Prophet no doubt had this in mind when they spread far and wide, taking his message and warning to every distant town. How few Muslims there are today who are inspired with that zeal to prove the truth of every word of the Qur'ân! It should, however, be noted that the verse does not contradict the statement in 35:24, and elsewhere, that a prophet was raised among every nation. The chapter opens with the statement that the Prophet was a warner to all nations. The statement made here shows that, if Allâh had pleased, He would have raised a warner in every town, but the oneness of humanity, which was a grand object following upon the Oneness of Allâh, could not have thus been brought about. Hence the verse that

follows requires a hard striving on the part of the Prophet and his followers for this grand achievement.

**52a.** This verse affords a clear proof of the significance of the word *jihâd*, as used in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. Every exertion to spread the Truth is, according to this verse, a *jihâd*; nay, it is called the *jihâd kabîr* ("mighty striving") or the *great jihâd*. *Fighting in defence of religion* received the name of *jihad*, because under the circumstances it became necessary for the Truth to live and prosper; if fighting had not been permitted,

Truth would surely have been uprooted. The commentators all accept this significance of the word here. It should be noted that the greatest *jihâd* which a Muslim can carry on is one by means of the Qur'ân, to which the personal pronoun *it* at the end of the verse unquestionably refers, because it must be carried on by every Muslim under all circumstances.

**53a.** Apparently the reference is to the sweet-water Rivers flowing on earth or underground and to the saltiest sea-water. But there is a deeper reference to the two lives which man leads on earth, a sweet life of faith and goodness, which brings satisfaction and peace to the mind, and a bitter life of faithlessness and wickedness, which ever increases the thirst for material gains and never brings satisfaction to the mind of man. Both existed in the world side by side, and so they would continue.

**55** And they serve besides Allâh that which can neither profit them, nor harm them. And the disbeliever is ever an aider against his *Rabb*.<sup>a</sup>

**56** And We have not sent thee but as a giver of good news and as a warner.

**57** Say: I ask of you naught in return for it except that he who will may take a way to his *Rabb*.

**58** And rely on the Ever-Living Who dies not, and celebrate His praise. And sufficient is He as being Aware of His servants' sins,<sup>a</sup>

**59** Who created the *samâwât* and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power, the Beneficent. So ask respecting Him one aware.<sup>a</sup>

**60** And when it is said to them: Make obeisance to the Beneficent, they say: And what is the Beneficent? Shall we make obeisance to what you bidding us? And it adds to their aversion.<sup>a</sup>

**54a.** The passage seems to hint at the flight to Madînah. The Prophet was related to the Makkans through his father, and to the Madînians through his mother. As his blood-relations had persecuted him and were bent upon killing him, he is now reminded of his relationship through marriage to another people. It was no doubt due to some such hint in the Divine revelation that the Prophet was searching, on the occasion of the pilgrimage, for adherents among the people of Madînah.

**55a.** The disbeliever aided the cause of untruth, as against his Lord, while the Prophet aimed at establishing the Truth in the world.

**58a.** So He knows best when to punish and whom to punish.

**59a.** The one aware is the Prophet, who possessed true knowledge of the Divine Being.

**60a.** The recitation of this verse is followed by an actual prostration; see 7:206a.

## **Prostration**

### **SECTION 6: The Transformation wrought**

**61** Blessed is He Who made the stars in the *samâwât* and made therein a sun and a moon giving light!

**62** And He it is, Who made the night and the day to follow each other, for him who desires to be mindful or desires to be thankful.<sup>a</sup>

**63** And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace!<sup>a</sup>

**64** And they who pass the night prostrating themselves before their *Rabb* and standing.

**65** And they who say: Our *Rabb*, avert from us the chastisement of hell; surely the chastisement thereof is a lasting evil:

**66** It is surely an evil abode and resting-place!

**62a.** The night is here spoken of as being the more opportune time for being mindful, i.e., for prayers, and the day for being thankful, i.e., for work and livelihood.

**63a.** From here to the end of the chapter is described the great transformation which the Prophet had already brought about. The great qualities spoken of as being met with in the servants of the Beneficent present a striking contrast with the evils which

reigned supreme in Arabia. They were an arrogant people, who trampled the rights of their fellow-men under their feet, but the faithful now walked in humility and led lives of lowliness, in which they had the greatest regard for others' rights (verse 63). In the days of ignorance they passed their nights in drunken orgies, but now they kept awake at night in devotion and were instead drunk with the love of Allâh (verse 64). In the days of ignorance they spent money extravagantly, when it was a question of pride, and they did not care for the poor dying of hunger, but now they saved every penny they could to spend on others (verse 67). Formerly idols were worshipped in the land of Arabia, human blood was shed on the slightest pretext, sex-relations were loose to an extreme, but they had now become the torch-bearers of Divine Unity, for whose sake they willingly suffered every privation, homicide was looked upon with abhorrence, the highest value was placed on the chastity of men and women, and righteousness was the one thing in which men and women vied one with another (verses 68–71). Truth and faithfulness were the great qualities that ruled men's minds, in the new dispensation, and a life full of vigour and earnestness was seen in the place of ignorance, superstition and immorality, which were the chief features of pre-Islâmic Arabia (verses 72–74).

**67** And they who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious and the just mean is ever between these.

**68** And they who call not upon another deity with Allâh and slay not the *nafs* which Allâh has forbidden, except in the cause of justice, nor commit fornication; and he who does this shall meet a requital of sin —

**69** The chastisement will be doubled to him on the day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein in abasement —

**70** Except him who repents and believes and does good deeds; for such Allâh changes their evil deeds to good ones.<sup>a</sup> And Allâh is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

**71** And whoever repents and does good, he surely turns to Allâh a (goodly) turning.

**72** And they who witness no falsehood, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.<sup>a</sup>

**73** And they who, when reminded of the messages of their *Rabb*, fall not down thereat deaf and blind.

**74** And they who say, Our *Rabb*, grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes, and make us leaders for those who guard against evil.

**70a.** Here we are plainly told that the transformation had already been wrought; the vices in which the people indulged erstwhile had been changed, to good and righteous deeds, and those who found pleasure in evil deeds now found pleasure in the doing of good. It was the soul-force of the Prophet that had wrought this miraculous transformation.

**72a.** They not only shunned falsehood but were now above everything that was vain or futile.

**75** These are rewarded with high places because they are patient, and are met therein with greetings and salutation,<sup>a</sup>

**76** Abiding therein. Goodly the abode and the resting-place!

**77** Say: My *Rabb* would not care for you, were it not for your prayer. Now indeed you have rejected, so the punishment will come.<sup>a</sup>

**75a.** Apparently they were being expelled from their homes but they felt as if they were being rewarded with high places, because their outlook on life was now spiritual and not material. In addition to the greetings and salutations of the angels they were promised greetings and salutations in their new centre of activity, Madînah, whither they were fleeing, because there a similar brotherhood of the righteous was now ready to receive these emigrants.

**77a.** The Truth had finally been rejected by the Makkans, so the disgrace and abasement which was promised for the opponents of Truth was now awaiting them. The righteous were finally separated from the wicked, so the punishment must come.